

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LISBON 02861 141933Z
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(B) LISBON 2436 (DTG 311828Z MAR 78)
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PAGE 02 LISBON 02861 141933Z

SUMMARY: AS A RESULT OF PROGRESS IN CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS,
TEACHER, PUBLIC SERVICE AND RAILROAD UNIONS HAVE CONDITIONALLY
SUSPENDED PLANS FOR NATIONWIDE STRIKES WHICH WOULD HAVE
COMPOUNDED THE PRESENT STATE OF LABOR UNREST. THE PCP AND
THE COMMUNIST-DOMINATED GENERAL WORKERS CONFEDERATION
(CGTP) ARE CONTINUING TO PROMOTE MEETINGS AND STREET

DEMONSTRATIONS PROTESTING THE GOP'S AUSTERITY PROGRAM BUT THE PARTIAL SETTLEMENT OF SERIOUS LABOR CONFLICTS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR SEEMS TO INDICATE THAT ORCHESTRATED STRIKE ACTION IS NOT PART OF CURRENT PCP STRATEGY. END SUMMARY.

1. TEACHERS BACK-OFF: THE TEACHERS UNION OF LISBON AND THE SOUTH HAS DECIDED TO FOREGO ADDITIONAL STRIKE ACTION DURING CONTRACT TALKS WITH THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE (MEC). HOWEVER, THE UNION HAS ANNOUNCED THAT TEACHERS WILL NOT GIVE EXAMINATIONS AND WILL WITHHOLD GRADES IF A SATISFACTORY AGREEMENT IS NOT REACHED BY THE END OF PRESENT GRADING PERIOD IN MID-JUNE. EDUCATION MINISTER CARDIA HAS AGREED TO DEBATE CONTRACT ISSUES WITH UNION REPRESENTATIVES ON NATIONAL TELEVISION APRIL 14. AT HEART OF THE DISPUTE IS MEC INSISTENCE THAT TEACHER UNIONS DO NOT HAVE THE RIGHT TO "NEGOTIATE" CONTRACTS BECAUSE TEACHERS ARE PUBLIC WORKERS. THE UNIONS DEMAND FULL NEGOTIATING RIGHTS.

2. PUBLIC SERVICE WORKERS: THE CONFLICT WITH PUBLIC SERVICE UNIONS IS OVER THE SAME ISSUE, THE RIGHT TO NEGOTIATE. THE UNIONS HAVE TENTATIVELY ACCEPTED NEW SALARY TABLES AND SUSPENDED A STRIKE PREVIOUSLY SCHEDULED FOR NEXT WEEK, BUT HAVE ANNOUNCED THEY WILL REMAIN IN A "STATE OF MOBILIZATION" UNTIL THE MINISTRY OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM AGREES TO ENTER "NEGOTIATIONS."

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PAGE 03 LISBON 02861 141933Z

3. RAILROAD WORKERS SETTLE: UNLIKE THE TEACHERS AND PUBLIC SERVICE WORKERS, EMPLOYEES OF THE STATE-OWNED RAILWAY SYSTEM DO NEGOTIATE CONTRACTS. ON APRIL 13 COMPANY OFFICIALS AGREED TO REDUCE THE DURATION OF THE COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT FROM 18 TO 12 MONTHS PENDING PUBLICATION OF A NEW DECREE REDUCING THE BARGAINING PERIOD (SEE LISBON 2584). THIS AND OTHER COMPANY CONCESSIONS TERMINATE A CONFLICT MARKED BY SEVERAL STRIKES AND WORK STOPPAGES IN THE PAST YEAR. HOWEVER, RAILROAD SUPERVISORY AND TECHNICAL EMPLOYEES HAVE CALLED A STRIKE FOR APRIL 19 TO FORCE THE TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS MINISTRY TO RATIFY A CONTRACT AGREED TO BY COMPANY AND UNION LAST MONTH. THE MINISTRY HAS DELAYED RATIFICATION PENDING THE OUTCOME OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE WORKER UNIONS SINCE THE NEW WAGE RATES FOR TECHNICAL PERSONNEL ARE CONSIDERED TO BE SUBSTANTIALLY HIGHER THAN THOSE NEGOTIATED FOR THE BLUE COLLAR EMPLOYEES.

4. COMMENT: WHILE THE THREATENED STRIKE OF RAILWAY TECHNICIANS COULD CAUSE PROBLEMS AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND TEACHER CONFLICTS ARE NOT FULLY RESOLVED, THE SUSPENSION OF STRIKE ACTION HAS RELIEVED SOME OF THE PRESSURE ON THE

GOVERNMENT FROM THE LABOR SECTOR. THE INEVITABLE PCP-
INSPIRED DEMONSTRATIONS MAY REPRESENT THE PARTY'S DESIRE
TO TEST ITS OWN ORGANIZATIONAL MACHINERY BUT CURRENT
UNION DEVELOPMENTS WILL ALLAY SOME OF THE CONCERN IN
GOVERNMENT CIRCLES (REFTEL B) THAT THE PCP MIGHT INCLUDE
MAJOR STRIKE CALLS IN ITS CURRENT ANTI-GOVERNMENT
CAMPAIGN.
BLOOMFIELD

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